DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING WRITING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the problems that teachers faced upon imparting writing skills to their students in ordinary classroom settings. It is noteworthy that developing students' English language writing skills can be a challenging task for any teacher. It is particularly so at the university levels within the context of Saudi Arabia. To write effectively in either a second or foreign language, it may require both high language skills and experience, and this can be perceived as a challenge for English Second Language learners. Upon observations, it was discovered in the present context that regular teaching plan happens with the sequential order of listening, speaking, reading and writing within teaching programs. Referring to this sequential order in which language skills are taught, writing comes as the last skill even though this skill cannot be disregarded and needs considerable attention from both teachers and students owing to its most importance in their daily academic lives.

Keywords: : teaching, writing skill, English language, teacher, challenge, grammar.

1. INTRODUCTION

Difficulties of teaching the writing skills of the English language are reportedly one of the most challenging tasks which are not only experienced by native speakers but also the English Second Language teachers around the globe. A significant number of students may have learned such writing skills in the course of their education at the high school level. These students' writing proficiency along with their weaknesses while undergoing their educational programs may only be revealed by means of assessing their coursework samples or final exams. Due to the increased demands that the academic writing place on the students for delivering an effective English language writing sample, it is therefore necessary to carry out an investigation to gauge whether or not the English Second Language teachers had to face difficulties in teaching writing skill Good writing requires preparation and suitable feedback, which teachers must never underestimate. Students with weaknesses of the English language writing skills may consequently result in lagging behind in both their academic and career lives. This research is considered a step to point out the deterring elements, which touch the teaching and the learning methods of the English language writing skills. The main contribution of this research is to highlight the most challenging aspects in relation to the environment and the learners due to which in many cases, influence the teachers in developing the English language writing skills. It is hoped that the outcomes of this study may serve as guidelines to the administrative authorities to help facilitate both the teaching and learning of writing skills at the university levels. The findings of this study revealed that the problems associated with

teaching of writing skills can be addressed by means of various approaches. The ultimate goal of the teachers is to develop the writing skills, competence of language among the students, which includes, sociolinguistics competence, grammatical competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. Besides, teachers also may need to have a better understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of all the primary writing methods. Teachers must always apply a combination of these approaches simultaneously since writing problems are likely to arise when teachers rely solely on one teaching technique or strategy.

THE MAIN PART

The findings are described regarding the English teachers' experiences in teaching writing and the challenges they confront during the teaching of writing, an English Teachers' Experiences in Teaching Writing Towards the question of what writing activities learners mostly perform in the classroom, the teachers mostly ask the learners to perform vary, all of which are related to genres of text such as report, recount, narrative and so on. Half of the subjects who mostly teach in Senior High School ask them to make a text in a form of controlled writing activities in the end of the writing class. Another half, however, tend to follow what is in the LKS and ask the learners to practice the writing in it such as filling up blanks, making sentences in a grammatical way, etc. Moreover, concerning time allocation for developing students' English writing skill by practicing in each period, among the ten (10) teachers, 30% of them give 25 to 30 minutes for writing practice on daily basis while 20% provide approximately 15 minutes only; to do a brainstorming, simple practice, etc. Only 10% give 40minutes and 40% give no time for writing practice at all. Also, teaching strategies or techniques that the teachers adopt for teaching writing vary. 30% of the subjects clearly mention GTM (Grammar Translation Method) is as the method they often use to teach writing, 40% use both GTM and DM (Direct Method). The rest of the subjects use techniques like brainstorming, mind-mapping, etc. Besides, some teachers mentioned some aids used to teach writing. They have either audio or video aids available in each classroom. Among those having such A/V aids available, however, only a half of them make use of the aids. Another half seldom or never use them in teaching writing. Nevertheless, the rest of the subjects do not use any aids unless white board and books because there are only white boards and books available; most of which are those teaching in rural area. The main discussion on whether writing is challenging, 90% of the subjects say that teaching writing is challenging due to several factors such as the class condition, the aids they can use for teaching and the availability of time the students can practice. They also mention several factors of the students' themselves, such as the students' linguistic competence, motivation and their low reading habit. Another 10% say that teaching writing is neither easy nor challenging compared to teaching writing. She found teaching speaking is more challenging than teaching writing. The students' performance was also discussed, related to the challenges. All of the subjects have the same answer that the learners writing ability in general are mostly poor. Those who are teaching in rural area notably found that at least 80% of their learners in a class have difficulties in linguistic competence such as lack of grammar and vocabulary mastery. Meanwhile, those who are in urban area admit that some learners are quite competent in writing, especially those who are in Senior High School. Those who are in Junior High School in urban area found that some students have quite good linguistic competence but very poor sentence structure ability. From ten (10) EFL teachers involved in this study, those who teach in either rural or urban area perceive teaching writing to be a quite challenging task. To discuss what factors contribute to the challenges, this study has found out that there are several factors which can be divided into internal and external factors. Internal factors mean those that appear to be the learners'. There are four internal factors will be discussed; native language interference, English competence (e.g. linguistic competence such as grammar knowledge, vocabulary mastery), motivation, and reading habit. In addition to the internal factors, there are other factors. To date, this study is the first to investigate teachers from different part of East Java regarding their challenges of teaching writing. Challenges in teaching writing are complex. It is not only related with the learners' factors but also external ones. In the internal factors, the challenges are related with native language, linguistic competence, and motivation. Those problems are related with condition of the learners. The external challenges are teaching writing at large class and the availability of aids and time. Based on the challenges above, it suggests the teacher: In the first place, the teachers need to

match the tasks that they ask the learners to perform with their language level. This means ensuring that they have the minimum language they would need to perform such a task. Secondly, the teachers need to ensure that there is a purpose to the task and that learners are aware of this.

THEORETICAL PART

Next stage, drafting can come. SS should attend to text generation globally, i.e. on the sentence and discourse level, not to worry about finer nuances of the appropriacy of individual words as yet, revising and editing. SS revise globally first (checking organisation and sequencing of ideas, attending to appropriacy of cohesive devices) and make necessary changes. Then they revise locally. This time attend to appropriacy of individual words. Encouraging students as early on as possible to use monolingual dictionaries is advisable. Correcting possible grammatical mistakes also belongs to this stage. Finally – proofreading. SS attend to spelling and punctuation here. The stages of drafting, revising, editing and proofreading can be done as homework for a more efficient exploitation of classroom time. Students then bring to the class the first draft they are satisfied with. Next – SS are given feedback on their drafts, preferably first by peers, then by T. It is useful to negotiate feedback so that SS have a clear understanding of what is unclear/wrong/inaccurate in their compositions. Problems and inaccuracies should only be indicated and students try to correct themselves. Still, they should also be allowed to rely on peers' and/or teacher's help on how to improve the necessary aspects if they feel they are not competent enough to cope. The writing skills are very important for the students with regard to assessment and evaluation of the students' level of understanding in different subjects. These skills are also significant in case of awarding grades. The grades are critically important for admissions to different degree program and for getting an employment. This study is based on the review of literature to explore difficulties faced by students in writing, especially in the second language. According to the researchers, writing is a reflective activity and requires thinking, ideas, relevant knowledge and vocabulary. The writing in second language becomes even more difficult task for the students. Writing is more difficult than speaking because the former is more formal than the latter, and also due to the fact that people speak more than writing in their routine life. Moreover, spoken language occurs in natural environment; whereas, writing takes place in artificial environment. Writing requires learning vocabulary and grammar. It has also been found that good writers are also the good readers. The literature shows that teachers use different approaches to teach writing skills to their students. Students' learning of the writing skills also depends on the teachers' approaches to teach the writing skills.

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING WRITING SKILL

Language transfer is another aspect through which nature of writing can be determined. According to a scholar, writers transfer writing abilities and strategies from their first language to their second language. In this regard Jones and Tetroe's study as cited in reported that "weaker writers" failure to use writing strategies in English was based on their failure to use these strategies in their first language". Contrary to this viewpoint is the opinion put forth by Blanchard &Root who argued that writing was like the art of driving a car. If one knows the art of driving, one may know the driving rules of that country, but if he is to drive in another country one may not know all the rules. Same is the case with languages. The conventions of language may change from one to another. Purposes of writing According to Coffin et all students compose writing for a number of reasons such as to be assessed, to develop their critical thinking skills, to help their understanding and memory, to broaden their learning beyond the classroom, to enhance their communicative skills, and to be prepared as future professionals in different fields of knowledge.

PROBLEM SOLVING IN WRITING SKILL.

Moreover, this approach makes the teacher judge the finished products of the students. Error detection also falls in this approach. Teachers find out the errors committed by the students and try to eliminate the. Process approach When the product approach could not provide fruitful results to composition writing more attention was given to the process of writing. Resultantly, this led to a shift towards what is called the process approach which considers writing as a complex, cognitive, recursive and evolving process. Six stages of writing

process are: determining the topic, taking account of readers, editing, proof reading and revising. In the words of Zeng process sees writing as a complicated cognitive process and it has multiple stages like pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing. But some drawbacks have also been attached to this approach. It does not focus on the variety and differentiation of the process of writing, specifically social context. Genre approach The genre approach is considered one of the important approaches of writing.

ABOUT WRITING SKILL.

It's fine to rattle off a stream of consciousness when you're writing in your journal, but if you actually want to communicate with others you'll need to bring some order to those rambling thoughts. Here are some tips. Albert Einstein said, "If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it yourself." Before you start writing, take a moment to mentally explain the concept to the six-year-old who lives inside your head. (We all have one, don't we?) If your writing goal is to achieve a specific result, ask yourself what that result should be. Before you dive into writing, have a clear purpose. Then stick to it. It doesn't take much thought-organizing to compose the average text message, but if you're writing something more complex, with multiple angles, questions, or requests, get all that stuff sorted before you sit down to write. Making an outline, or even just some quick notes about the topics you want to cover, can save you time answering clarifying questions later. And speaking of questions . . Put yourself in your readers' shoes. Do they have enough context to understand what you've written for them? If not, fill in the blanks. But . . . If you've taken the time to organize your thoughts in advance, you should be able to keep things simple. The idea is to give readers just enough to understand what you're communicating without overwhelming them with trivial details. If you find yourself getting in the weeds with more details than you need, look at each piece of information and ask whether it's essential to help your reader understand your message. If not, get rid of it.

IMPORTANCE OF WRITING SKILL

Teachers should show learners good texts, highlighting their outstanding features. Third, students should receive regular feedback to keep track of their own success in writing. This feedback can take the form of teacher to students, students to students, and student self-reflection, using for example the Virtual Writing Tutor. More about this online tool in lecture. Other strategies that we can mention include teaching grammar explicitly, providing challenging activities, and helping students build their vocabulary. Looking at it from students' angle - typically in their teens, or younger. Writing skills may not be well developed in their mother tongue either. Their immature L1 writing skills imply: considerable input and practice in "higher order concerns" - development of ideas, organization, etc. – is needed.

CONCLUSION.

Like all learning problems, difficulties in writing can be devastating to a child's education and self-esteem. As children progress through school, they are increasingly expected to express what they know about many different subjects through writing. If a child fails to develop certain basic skills, he will be unable to write with the speed and fluency required to excel as these demands increase. Indeed, for a child struggling with a writing problem, the writing process itself interferes with learning. Students faced with such difficult odds have trouble staying motivated. Writing problems rarely occur in isolation, and improvements in writing go hand in hand with the development of other non-writing-specific skills. Thus, a problem with the development in one of these areas is likely to interfere with a child's progress as a writer. It's important to remember that many children and adolescents make mistakes or experience problems as part of the process of becoming better writers. They may reverse words, spell poorly, or have difficulty producing their thoughts in writing, or exhibit other of the signs above. As in any academic area, teachers and parents must watch carefully and try to understand an individual child's strengths and weaknesses to ensure progress. One way to monitor progress is through collecting a portfolio of a child's work over time. This may help in identifying a problem early on and developing effective strategies.

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